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Sodexo wins first schools PFI contract in Ireland

Food and facilities management company Sodexo has been awarded preferred bidder status in the first Irish schools private finance initiative (PFI). Sodexo is part of a consortium which has won the first part of a major PFI contract to design, build, finance and operate four secondary schools in the Republic.

The initial four schools are St. Mary's CBS and Scoil Chriost Ri, Portlaoise; St. Rynagh's CC, Banagher, Co. Offaly and Gallen CS, Ferbane, Co. Offaly. This is the first of five bundles of schools, spread over a two year period, with 23 schools being built in total.

When the contract begins in mid-2008, Sodexo will provide facilities management services at each site, ranging from caretaking, cleaning and waste management to grounds maintenance and energy management.

The project was led by Sodexo's facilities management division in the UK with support from Sodexo's investments division and Sodexo Ireland. Lindsey Coles, commercial director for Sodexo investments, said: "This is the first PFI contract for Sodexo in Ireland and provides us with a great foundation to expand in this market. "

In Portlaoise, there will be two new schools on a shared campus with some shared facilities. St. Mary's CBS and Scoil Chriost Ri will each provide 850 pupil places and will be run independently under separate boards of management.

St. Rynagh's CC in Banagher will be an amalgamation of the existing St. Rynagh's Vocational Schools and La Sainte Union Secondary School to provide 450 pupil places.

Gallen CS in Ferbane will be an amalgamation of Ferbane Vocational School and St. Joseph's and St. Saran's secondary school to provide 450 pupil places.

Coles added: "The overall objective is to deliver high quality buildings with room for expansion, both aesthetically pleasing internally and externally, with affordable facilities and excellent internal and external sports facilities."

Matthew Pease-Watkin, managing director of facilities management & land technology, Sodexo, said: "This contract is the eighth PFI win for the division. Our success within these high profile public sector contracts is proving to be the benchmark for facilities services across the board. It is also our first win outside of the UK and gives us a strong, long term foothold within Ireland which will act as a great reference point for future growth."

The consortium partner is Macquarie Bank, the Australian merchant bank and financial services group. Other parties sub-contracted to the consortium are Depfa Bank, builders and designers Piers Construction, engineering management consultants White Young and Green and Wejchert Architects.

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About Sodexo

In the UK and Ireland, Sodexo employs 48,000 employees, and provides food and facilities management services to clients at over 2,300 locations in the business and industry, education, healthcare, leisure and defence sectors.

Many clients rely on Sodexo for cost-effective solutions to their employee or hospitality catering, or to deliver services such as cleaning, reception, switchboard and help desks, mailroom, reprographics and grounds maintenance.

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Sodexo is part of Sodexo Alliance the leading global provider of food and management services, with more than 332,000 employees at 28,300 sites in 80 countries.